

## **Estica in archives abroad**

Aadu Must

- The historical peculiarity of Estonia is the long-term governance of various foreign powers, and a relatively brief independence period. For this reason, the reference sources of Estonian history are dispersed between the archives of numerous countries (Vatican, Sweden, Poland, Denmark, Russia, Latvia). The archives of many other countries also provide important additional information on Estonian history.
- A marked proportion of the documents reflecting the history of the Estonian people (recent history, in particular) is in danger of being lost (have not been collected into archives, loss of the owner, danger of physical destruction due to bad storage conditions, lack of funds to carry out conservation and restoration work).
- From the standpoint of the preservation of the Estonian national memory, it is a priority to clarify the archives that contain substantial, and systematic, demographic and personal history information, as well as economic, cultural, political and other information, and then to collect these into archives, or also to copy. For this purpose, a state Compatriot Program has been launched in Estonia. The overwhelming majority of information on the history of Estonia and Estonians that has not been clarified, made available for research, and that is also in danger of being destroyed, is located in Russia. This affects both materials on the history of Estonians in Russia (in 1918, ca 20% of Estonians lived in Russia) as well as the material stored in the various archives of the Russian state and the Soviet Union.
- An important role in the preservation of the national written memory is played by private initiative and various civil associations, including the Estonian national culture societies and other societies located abroad, who could primarily collect materials documenting their own activities and those of their members, but who could also distribute information on basic archival principles (see, for example, the archival training projects initiated by the Estonian community in Sweden decades ago).